

Executive Officer's Statement

April 19, 2007

Victims' Rights Week Outreach Affirms Our Mission

From coast to coast during National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the victims' rights community will stand united. For the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board, the week's theme of "Victims' Rights: Every Victim. Every Time." underscores our goal of reaching every victim of violent crime who can benefit from our services.

The April 22-28 observance is an opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of victims' services providers, law enforcement, advocates and others who serve victims. It is a chance to rally alongside victims, our staff and local partners, law enforcement and nonprofit providers, and to raise awareness of victims' issues.

In this 25th anniversary year of the California Victims' Bill of Rights, we can be proud of our state's legacy of victims' rights. The Golden State can count many firsts, which include the establishment of the first compensation program in the nation in 1965, the first hospital-based rape treatment center, the first victim assistance program, and the first domestic violence center. California helped inspire the national victims' rights movement.

The Victims' Bill of Rights gave crime victims a constitutional right to restitution from the offender, and California's Victim Compensation Program is the state resource on restitution issues. Our criminal restitution compacts with counties and partnerships with state agencies have helped increase the imposition of restitution orders and collections.

Despite past successes, there is much work left to do. One of our top priorities is reaching out to California crime victims who suffer in silence or who simply don't know Victim Compensation Program services are available.

The latest report on criminal victimization from the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that 53% of violent crimes were never brought to the attention of law enforcement. More than 60% percent of sexual assault crimes go unreported. Statistics show teenagers are twice as likely to become victims of violent crime, but tend not to report the crime and have limited resources to recover. Another study shows more than 92% percent of elder abuse is unreported.

To live up to the Victims' Rights Week promise of reaching "every victim," we must overcome the barriers of disability, age, language, isolation and misunderstanding that keep victims from achieving their rights.

We are reaching out to these victims with many initiatives. During National Crime Victims' Rights Week this includes distributing commemorative ribbons, fliers and other materials to stakeholders throughout the state. The ribbons provided by the Board are an annual tradition, allowing crime victims, supporters and service providers to make a special statement of solidarity. On Monday, April 23, VCGCB staff will kick off the week with a march to an event on the west steps of the State Capitol.

Throughout this annual observance we remember that the message of Crime Victims' Rights Week is also our year-round commitment to victims of violent crime: We are here to assist you.

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Speakers Highlight Western Regional NACVCB Conference, Co-hosted by VCGCB

As co-host of the recent Western Regional Conference of the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards in San Diego, the Board contributed to an enriching and valuable program featuring nationally known speakers. Casey Gwinn, Chief Executive Officer of the San Diego Family Justice Center, provided insights into the center's comprehensive approach to helping victims of family violence. San Diego County Deputy District Attorney Paul Greenwood shared his expertise in the area of elder abuse. Barbara Ryan, Director of Clinical Services at the Chadwick Center for Children and Families, San Diego Children's Hospital, gave a presentation on details of the treatment of child-abuse victims. Representatives from 15 Western state compensation programs attending the April 10-13 conference also discussed additional issues such as enhancing claims processing, public outreach and expanding benefits to crime victims.

Successful Symposium on Crime Victims' Rights – The Third Wave

Thought-provoking speakers and information-rich presentations highlighted the "Symposium on Crime Victims' Rights – The Third Wave," presented by the Capital Center for Government Law and Policy at the University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law and co-sponsored by VCGCB. Participants at the March 20-21 symposium included representatives of local, state and federal victims' organizations. California, including the VCGCB and its allied agencies, received good marks for fulfilling important victims' rights such as the right to restitution. Much of the discussion centered on the theme of the "Third Wave" in victims' rights, the next era in which victims, supporters and service providers work to enhance enforcement of victims' rights. Other co-hosts were the Office of the Governor, Crime Victim Advocate; the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Office of Victim and Survivor Services; and the California District Attorneys Association.

CaRES County Pilots "Go Live"

The VCGCB has passed a significant milestone in the pilot rollout of its new CaRES automated claims processing system for the Victim Compensation Program (VCP). On March 19, VCP staff from our Sacramento and San Joaquin County Joint Powers partners started training at our Sacramento headquarters. On Monday, April 2, CaRES "went live" at these two pilot counties' local offices. Training for staff from San Bernardino County began April 2 and CaRES "went live" in this county on Monday, April 9. These pilot projects are proving CaRES' functionality in a small, regional and large county Joint Powers unit. Feedback from the pilot projects will ensure the system meets the needs of local county partners before the phased statewide rollout, scheduled for May and June.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

In an effort to increase public awareness of the frequency and breadth of sexual violence, April has been designated as Sexual Assault Awareness Month, first observed in 2001. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men in the United States has experienced an attempted or completed rape at some time in their lives.

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VCGCB Updates

- **Bus Shelter Pilot Project Under Way.** We are a month into the VCGCB bus shelter outreach pilot project. Our combination English/Spanish language poster is featured in 60 bus shelters in several Los Angeles County high-crime areas. The Los Angeles County District Attorney Victim Witness Assistance Program is tracking response to the campaign. After the pilot project concludes in early May, we will evaluate the effectiveness of this outreach strategy.

Events

- **April 10-12** – VCGCB gave a presentation at the San Diego Family International Justice Center Conference hosted by the San Diego Family Justice Center.
- **April 11** – VCGCB was an exhibitor sponsor of Protecting Privacy Online: A California Identity Theft Summit. VCGCB staffed an exhibit booth at the South San Francisco event, which was presented by the State and Consumer Services Agency, Department of Consumer Affairs and California District Attorneys Association.
- **April 13** – VCGCB attended the 25th Annual Child Abuse Symposium in Santa Clara. The symposium was presented by the Santa Clara County Child Abuse Council.
- **April 13** – VCGCB attended the Victims' Rights Conference and Awards Luncheon presented by Orange County Community Service Programs in Santa Ana.